

INTRODUCTION OF THE SECURITY
AND FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT
ACT (SAFE)

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 30, 2003

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, as we near the end of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I rise today to announce the re-introduction of legislation I authored to truly recognize and help the estimated two million women in this country who are victims of domestic violence.

Victims of domestic violence suffer on many fronts. In addition to the physical and emotional battery, women who are abused also struggle to maintain employment and, as a result, experience tremendous financial hardships. According to a 1998 report of the U.S. General Accounting Office, between one-quarter and one-half of domestic violence victims surveyed in three studies reported losing a job due, wholly or in part, to domestic violence. For victims of sexual assault, the numbers are even more alarming. Nearly 50 percent of survivors say they were forced to leave their jobs because of the crime. Stalking victims also report losing significant time at work.

There are many reasons for this volatile employment picture. Abusers often track down and harass their victims at work and may even follow them home. By creating disturbances on the job and making threats, the perpetrator may force the victim to quit or place her at risk of being fired.

I was told recently of a woman named Nancy who is a victim of domestic violence in my Los Angeles district. She, like so many other women, was forced to quit her job at a fast food restaurant after her husband showed up there, pounded on the door, scratched her car with his keys and repeatedly threatened her. Nancy, whose name has been changed, sought help at a local domestic violence shelter where she received the support she needed for herself and her two-year-old child. Now, she is taking a non-violent parenting class and undergoing counseling. She also receives support in court proceedings to get a restraining order enforced, divorce her husband, and settle a child custody dispute.

For Nancy, quitting her job and seeking help at the shelter gave her the support and the time she needed to get her life back in order. But many victims—especially depending upon the State in which they live—do not feel they have the same choices as Nancy and, as a result, may not be as willing to seek help, placing themselves and their families in greater danger.

That's because Federal law does not specifically allow women who leave work as a result of domestic violence to collect unemployment compensation. Nor does Federal law allow victims of domestic violence to take leave from work to deal with abuse-related priorities, such as getting appropriate medical care, victim services or legal assistance. Without these important added protections, victims of abuse who live in certain States deal with the fear that if they take time off, they risk being fired and left with no way to support themselves or their children. Given this alternative, some women may choose not to seek the help they need—or, even worse, remain in an abusive relationship.

To address the inadequacy of our current laws, I have introduced the Security and Financial Empowerment Act (SAFE Act). This bill ensures that victims of domestic violence are allowed 30 days of unpaid leave from work to make necessary court appearances, contact law enforcement officials or make alternative housing arrangements, without the fear of being fired or demoted. Further, to make sure victims retain financial independence, the SAFE Act would require all States to provide unemployment benefits to women who are forced to leave work (whether they quit or are fired) because of domestic violence. To date, I'm proud to say that more than 30 States have already enacted similar provisions, including my home State of California, but a uniform national policy is needed. The SAFE Act would also provide employers with a workplace safety program tax credit as an incentive to provide employees with domestic violence safety and education programs.

After all, employers also pay a high price in decreased productivity, employee absenteeism and staff turnover because of domestic violence. In fact, it is estimated that domestic violence costs U.S. employers between \$3 billion and \$13 billion annually.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all of my colleagues to support the SAFE Act and, in doing so, help victims of domestic violence and businesses deal more effectively with this serious problem. Let's pass this needed legislation and help millions of victims of domestic violence to obtain the employment and financial stability they need to do what Nancy is doing—repair their lives and build a safe future for themselves and their families.

HONORING WELDON RUCKER

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 30, 2003

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a great man and public servant, Mr. Weldon Rucker, for his 31 years of service to the community. Today, Mr. Rucker retires as City Manager of the City of Berkeley in California.

Weldon Rucker is a 42-year resident of Berkeley and proud husband of Jeanie Rucker, a former member of the Berkeley Unified School District Board of Education. They have two adult daughters and two granddaughters. He is a graduate of Saint Mary's College and holds a bachelor's degree in business management. On the national stage, Mr. Rucker serves as Vice President of the National Forum of Black Public Administrators.

Mr. Rucker leaves behind a legacy of outstanding public service and leadership. He began his career with the City of Berkeley in the early 1970s as the City's Director of the Young Adult Project and then as Youth Employment Director. Rucker moved through the ranks of the City's administration, occupying the positions of Director of Human Resources and in the late 1980s and early 1990s as Director of the Health and Human Services Department.

He was appointed to the position of City Manager in February 2001 after having served as acting City Manager following the departure of his predecessor. Rucker previously served as an Interim City Manager in 1995 but de-

clined an appointment to the City's top post at that time.

Under his leadership, the City of Berkeley has taken numerous initiatives to address chronic issues within the City and to firmly establish an open, accessible, and efficient City government.

Mr. Rucker is directly responsible for establishing the Office of Neighborhood Services, a direct link between City staff and the public that works to ensure fast and effective responses to local concerns. Under Neighborhood Services, Weldon set four full-time code enforcement officers to maintain close tabs on problem properties, graffiti, and illegal dumping among many other issues.

In an effort to improve access to city government, he also established the City Center, a one-stop information center for residents to help them navigate City bureaucracies and to provide answers to frequently asked questions and common requests. City Center provides information to thousands of residents and has proved to be an invaluable community resource.

Finally, as we honor Mr. Rucker today, I want to thank him for being an exemplary role model, administrator, and leader. I take great pride in joining the residents of Berkeley, Mr. Rucker's family, friends and colleagues to recognize and salute the accomplishments and contributions of Weldon Rucker.

MINISERIES ON THE REAGANS

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 30, 2003

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many people have seen that CBS will soon air a miniseries on the Reagans. I must admit that the only reason I'm aware of it is because our esteemed colleague, JOHN D. DINGELL, was good enough to share the letter below with us.

He's got it right. If CBS is going to commemorate the Reagan years, they should do it accurately. I recommend the letter below as an effective tool for remembering the host of egregious events that occurred during the Reagan Administration.

OCTOBER 29, 2003.

Mr. LESLIE MOONVES,
President and CEO,
CBS Television, New York, NY.

DEAR MR. MOONVES: I write to you with regard to your upcoming mini-series "The Reagans." I share the concerns expressed by others that it may not present an accurate depiction of the Reagan administration and America during the 1980s. I trust that CBS will not be a party to a distorted presentation of American history, and that the mini-series will present a fair and balanced portrayal of the Reagans, the 1980s and their legacy.

As someone who served with President Reagan, and in the interest of historical accuracy, please allow me to share with you some of my recollections of the Reagan years that I hope will make it into the final cut of the miniseries: \$640 Pentagon toilet seats; ketchup as a vegetable; union busting; firing striking air traffic controllers; IranContra; selling arms to terrorist nations; trading arms for hostages; retreating from terrorists in Beirut; lying to Congress; financing an illegal war in Nicaragua; visiting Bitburg cemetery; a cozy relationship with Saddam Hussein; shredding documents; Ed Meese; Fawn